

Middleborough Antiquarian

Devoted to the preservation of local history by
MIDDLEBOROUGH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

Established 1922

\$3.50

VOLUME XXVIII

FALL 1990

NUMBER 2



THE MIDDLEBORO COMMERCIAL Band, in 1914, included, front row, from left, Chester Shaw, piccolo, flute, Carl White, clarinet, Horace Osborne, clarinet, Al Fickert, trumpet, Bert Standish, trumpet, Tom Hart, trumpet, Ralph Caswell, trumpet; second row, Bartholomew, George Benn, Roy Caswell, french horn, John Carter, trombone, Charles Fickert, trombone, Walter Erickson, trombone, Ray Turner, trombone, Eugene Hathaway, baritone; standing, Bill Warr, bass horn, Al Whitcomb, bass horn, Carol Oakes, snare drum, Art McAllister, bass drum, McGregor, librarian, Mike Baker, bass horn, and John Carter, Sr., director and trumpet. (Photo from the Middleborough Historical Museum collection)

Take Good Care of Yourself Have an Ocean Spray!



The farmer's cooperative that brings you
a wide range of natural fruit juices, drinks and sauces

Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc., Lakeville-Middleboro, MA 02349

An Equal Opportunity Employer

A message from the editor

If curling up with a good book is your idea of a great way to spend a fall evening, and you're a local history buff, opportunities abound for you this autumn.

Whether your interests lie in the area's prehistoric past, in its early Native American inhabitants, in its prominent 18th and 19th century families, in its turn of the century appearance or in its most famous residents, reading material is readily available. What's more, the books have local authors, and the writing style in each case is more likely to send you looking for additional sources than to put you to sleep in your easy chair.

The most recent book on Middleboro's past is "The Story of Middleboro's Pre-historic Origins," by Middleboro residents Warren and Marion Whipple. The 59-page paperback, available at Farrar's and Maria's bookstore on Center Street, traces Middleboro's prehistory from its geologic origins to the first permanent settlement some 2,000 years ago, and to the Woodland Indians who began planting crops at Assawompsett, Titicut and Nemasket some 500 years ago. The book also discusses the exploration of North America by Europeans, and the so-called Contact Period, when Native Americans first interacted with

the English settlers who would one day take over their homeland.

Mr. and Mrs. Whipple wrote their book after spending more than 30 years traveling and researching the subjects they touch on in their study of local history and human activity. Mr. Whipple, a professional photographer who is now retired from the Winthrop-Atkins Company, has joined his wife in the full-time pursuit of historical knowledge. Mrs. Whipple, who is also retired, taught history for many years at Middleboro High School and was the head of the Social Studies Department.

The book is in some ways a compilation of material that will be familiar to readers, but it also offers tidbits of information — some theories, along with a provocative mystery or two — that should pique the curiosity of local history buffs.

Also available in print is a history of the Eddy family, and of the area of Middleboro known as Eddyville, thanks to its most prominent citizens. Written by Sylvia Breck, the wife of a direct descendant of the first Eddy family members to settle in Middleboro, the 154-page book includes biographical sketches and accompanying portraits or photographs of members of the Eddy family; a history of the family beginning with the arrival of John and Samuel in Plymouth in 1630; a tour of the Eddy Homestead, which is operated as a museum and is open to the public; and a history of the Eddy Family Association, in which Mrs. Breck and her husband Richard have served as officers for a number of years.

The book is available from the association.

In honor of the town's observance of Founder's Day in June, Historical Commission associate member Walter Thompson compiled a collection of photographs of old Middleboro. Featuring most of the town's important buildings and offering in its lengthy captions a thumbnail history of the town, the book is available at The Middleboro Gazette office on West Grove Street.

A perennial favorite, Mrs. Mertie Romaine's biography of General Tom Thumb and his wife, Middleboro native Lavinia Warren, is now available in paperback as well as hardcover, from the Historical Association and at The Middleboro Gazette office. Since the book is in its last printing, those interested in purchasing it should do so before the current supply is exhausted.

The fascinating little book, written in Mrs. Romaine's flowing conversational style, tells the story of the famous "Little People" who traveled with P. T. Barnum and then returned to Middleboro to live. The couple's handsome home still stands on Plymouth Street, across from the half Cape that was Lavinia's birthplace, and is now the home of museum director Marsha Manchester and her husband James.

Why not spend some time this fall discovering the past right here in Middleboro?

— Jane Lopes

MIDDLEBOROUGH ANTIQUARIAN

Middleboro, Mass.

VOLUME XXVIII FALL 1990 NUMBER 2

Jane C. Lopes Editor

OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

President Robert M. Beals

Vice President Thomas Weston

Secretary Jean Michael

Treasurer Edward M. Pratt

Directors Thomas A. Maddigan

Warren K. Richmond Eileen L. Atkins

Museum Director Marsha Manchester

Curator Marsha Manchester

Historical Association Annual Membership

Single	\$10.00	Sustaining	\$ 50.00
Family	15.00	Benefactor	100.00
Participating	20.00	Life	200.00

Membership includes each issue of Middleborough Antiquarian. Subscriptions \$10.00 per year. Single copies \$3.50.

Dues and subscriptions — mail to Jean Michael,
P.O. Box 304, Middleboro



COTTAGES at Lake Assawompsett, 1920, damaged by ice and high water. (Photos courtesy of George Barden)

Lakeside, 1920

by George Barden

In the second and third decade of this century there was a small colony of summer cottages on the northeast shore of Lake Assawompsett between the Nemasket River and Owl Swamp. Some were hardly more than shacks and some were fairly substantial, but none had electricity, modern plumbing or heat except for a fireplace and a wood-burning kitchen range. Water for washing was pumped in through a pipe that ended at the kitchen sink, which was equipped with a hand pump. Drinking water came from a community well a short distance up the road; here the cottagers could exchange pleasantries and the local gossip as they awaited their turns at the pump with their five-gallon water jugs.

There were no street addresses and no mail delivery here but each cottage had its own name, usually advertised by a prominently displayed sign. Grandfather Alden's cottage, built

in 1915, was the "Lone Pine" and this "camp," as it was then called, was the scene of many happy family gatherings over the years until 1927, when the city of Taunton forced the cottagers to leave the area to protect the water supply. Grandfather had purchased the lot of land from Captain Bradford, a retired sea captain who lived on Vaughn Street by the bridge over the Nemasket River. The Captain eked out his income by raising vegetables and selling them from his wagon to the housewives at Lakeside. He clung to his seagoing ways, however; once a week he would "swab decks" by emptying buckets of water on the bare floors of his farmhouse and pushing the flood out the doors with a big mop.

To a small boy, "going to the Lakes" was the equivalent of a visit to the Garden of Eden. "The Lakes" had a distinct ambiance epitomized by the fragrance of the pines, the sound of crows cawing in the woods, the glint of sunlight on the wavelets

All who wanted to swim in the lake did so, keeping a wary eye on the lookout for the "Inspector," a person who it is now suspected must have been a mythical figure, as no one ever got caught wet-handed.

and the lumber-camp smell of the cottage with its bare-rafter construction, oil cloth covered tables and kerosene lamps. The road from Vaughn Street to Lakeside consisted of two ruts across the open fields where there is now a densely wooded area. A dirt road ran parallel to the lake shore with the houses situated directly on the shore and the garages and other out-buildings on the other side of the road. Most of the properties included a wharf running out into the lake as boating, even motor boating, was allowed, although swimming in the lake was forbidden. This restriction was constantly flouted by the Lakeside population, however; all who wanted to swim in the lake did so, keeping a wary eye on the lookout for the "Inspector," a person who it is now suspected must have been a mythical figure, as no one ever got caught wet-handed. Swimming was legal at the mouth of the Nemasket River just beyond the gatehouse, and sometimes the swimmers went there to regain their feeling of righteousness.

All the cottagers were Middleboro people. The Aldens could count among their neighbors the Weemans, Dewhursts, Johnsons, Amsdens, Carlsons, Turners and Robinsons, to name a few. At a typical family gathering at Grandfather Alden's one would see Wink Shuman and his wife Grace (Wink played bass drum in the Middleboro Band and was known to play everything on his music sheet, the fly specks as well as the notes); Gus and Mamie Johnson with their daughter Eleanor and her husband Bill Rose, the affable automobile dealer; Jack and Carrie Hayes; Jim and Rose McCarthy; George and Mildred Barden; Leonard and Priscilla Wolfe, and numerous children.

The interior of the Alden cottage was just one big room, two stories high. One corner was set up as a kitchen while the remainder served as a living area, with the big dining table in the center of the room. The sleeping quarters consisted of partitioned areas on the gallery that ran around all four sides of the room, with heavy curtains shielding the occupants from the gaze of those in the room below. Sleeping here was something like sleeping in the upper berth of a Pullman car, but more roomy. It was the habit of one small boy, having been put to bed after supper, to peer through the crack in the curtains at the grown-ups clustered around the table below and listen to the murmur of their voices as they played cards or read by the light of the big kerosene lamp with the Tiffany shade.

Amusements were simple and mostly of the do-it-yourself variety. The men fished and cut wood. In the winter they fished through the ice and sailed ice boats on the lake, which seemed to be frozen over more than it has been lately. The ladies went on bird watching walks (through the woods, across Faxon's field, out to Walnut Street and back); the children went to play at the White Banks.

The walk to the White Banks was a small adventure in itself.

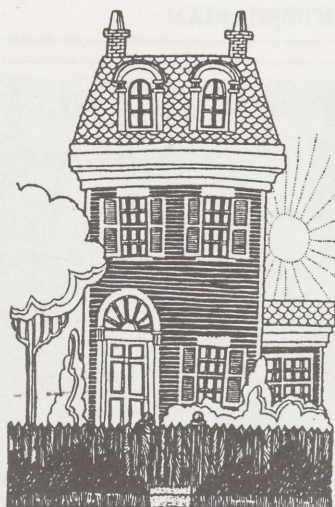


THE ARTHUR H. Alden cottage, now located at Briarwood Beach on the Weweantic River, Wareham shown during the high water at Lake Assawompsett, 1920.

A short walk along the beach brought one to the Red Brook, which ran from Owl Swamp into the lake. The brook, about ten feet wide and knee deep, was aptly named as it was the color of tawny port - evidence of the bog iron in the swamp. Once the brook had been crossed the White Banks were reached by another short walk along the beach, where every now and then an arrowhead could be picked up. The White Banks (actually one bank) were a large hill of clean white sand much more devoid of trees than it appears to be now; it seemed as though a huge dune from the Sahara had been plunked down on the shore of Lake Assawompsett. Many happy mornings were spent on the White Banks and many a picnic lunch enjoyed there. A special treat was an evening boat ride to Staples Shore to buy ice cream at Gay's, and once in a while a long walk to the old Barden home by the "back way," via Wood and Acorn streets to Barden Hill Road.

(Continued on page 8)

News
from
home



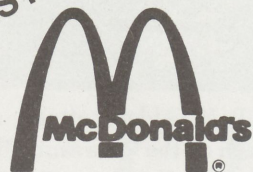
For the past 137 years, we've been giving you the news you need in Middleboro, Lakeville, Freetown and surrounding communities. Accurate, penetrating government news, sharp school sports coverage, and features about the people who make our towns special places to live and work... you'll find all of this and more each and every Thursday morning in your hometown newspaper.

The Middleboro Gazette

Serving Middleboro, Lakeville and Freetown
148 West Grove St., PO Box 551, Middleboro, MA 02346

947-1760

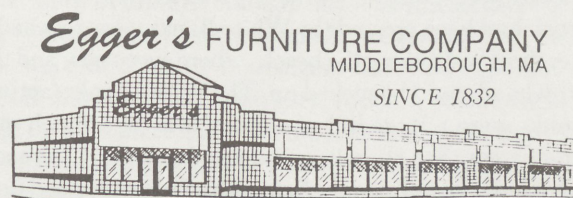
IT'S A
GOOD TIME
FOR THE
GREAT TASTE™



Buses Welcome

800 North Main Street
(At Shaw's South Plaza)
W. Bridgewater, MA
584-7110

4 Clark Street
Middleboro Center Exit 4
Off Rt. 495
Middleboro, MA
947-5600



"New England's Oldest Furniture Store"

177 CENTER ST.
DOWNTOWN MIDDLEBORO

947-0680

A ANDERSON CUSHING

Insurance Agency, Inc.

148 West Grove Street, Middleboro, MA 02346 947-3036/947-1385

1 Chace Road, Crossroads Common, E. Freetown, MA 02717 763-3739

WE'RE YOUR MORE-THAN-ONE-COMPANY AGENT.



VOLUME ONE — of the MIDDLEBORO, MASSACHUSETTS VITAL RECORDS

Births to 1838
Deaths to 1800
Marriages to 1772

Edited by
Barbara Lambert Merrick
and Alicia Crane Williams

\$35.00 plus \$2.50 postage
\$30.00 for members of the
Middleboro Historical Association

Published by
The Massachusetts Society
of Mayflower Descendants

Send order to:
Edward M. Pratt
Box 625
Middleboro, MA 02346

Massachusetts and the Constitution: The local angle on ratification

by Jane Lopes

Upon his return from the first Continental Congress in Philadelphia, there were rumors "that his mission was to interfere in some way with the union of the colonies," historian Thomas Weston tells us.

Under the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, which he had opposed, he refused to pay taxes to support the Congregational Church, and was taken by the authorities as far as Bridgewater, where a woman paid the tax for him.

He was the author of such publications as "An Appeal to the People of Massachusetts Against Arbitrary Power," and an outspoken advocate of the separation of church and state. A delegate to the state convention called to consider the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1788, he carried instructions from his town meeting to vote against the document, and during the debate he spoke in favor of personal liberty.

And yet, Issac Backus not only voted for the Constitution; he returned to his community and continued to be a respected leader until his death in 1806, as did the fellow delegate, Issac Thompson, who voted "yea" along with him.

There are several explanations for the behavior of Backus, Thompson and the folks back home in Middleboro. One is that the two men, along with others who initially opposed the Constitution, went along in the end because there was no religious test for federal officials in the new government, because the slave trade should be abolished by 1808, and because no titles of nobility were allowed in the new government.

The second possible explanation is that, like many other Massachusetts residents, opponents of the Constitution were influenced by leading politicians who either supported the document from the start or came to believe that a strong national government was necessary in order to preserve the shaky union that existed under the Articles of Confederation.

The third, and perhaps strongest, possible explanation is that Backus and Thompson, like their fellow New Englanders, were strong-minded individuals who were jealous of their liberty but at the same time concerned about the future and loyal to their country — after their own fashion, of course.

Of the four Middleboro delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Massachusetts, Backus was the one with at least regional fame, but the rest were pillars of the community back home and were perhaps more typical of the average convention delegate.

Issac Soule, the grandson of James Soule, an early settler of Middleboro, was born in 1732 and was reputed to be an astrologer. According to Weston's history of Middleboro, Soule was "visited by many people from a distance, who came to inquire



ELDER ISAAC BACKUS was a delegate to the 1788 convention where Massachusetts ratified the new U.S. Constitution. Although he was instructed to oppose it, he ultimately voted "yea."

into their future." Otherwise, he apparently led a fairly prosaic life.

Benjamin Thomas, a deacon of the First Congregational Church, served as a state representative and was a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1766 (the townspeople instructed him to push for independence.) In 1795 he was appointed to a committee to plan the construction of a new town house.

Both Soule and Thomas voted against the Constitution at the 1788 convention.

Isaac Thompson, who was born in Middleboro in 1745, was a farmer and stone cutter as well as a politician. A member of the building committee to construct a new church for the First Congregational Parish, he was a private in the Revolutionary War, a Middleboro selectman from 1778-1786, a representative to the General Court until 1782-1786, and a justice of the peace. After the constitutional Convention, he was reelected

(Continued on page 10)



MIDDLEBOROUGH Historical Association president Robert Beals holds a trombone that was owned by John Carter. The instrument was presented to the historical museum by his daughter, Mrs. Floretta (Carter) Ferrero of North Dartmouth. Band director John M. Carter was her grandfather. (Photo by Jane Lopes)

The Middleboro Commercial Band

by Robert M. Beals

Several bands were formed in the Middleboro area from about 1865 to 1930. In 1911, the Middleboro Commercial Band was organized with John M. Carter as director.

When the bandstand was erected in 1919 in the parking lot behind the Town Hall, concerts were usually held there on Saturday evenings during the summer months. Several listeners would stand around the bandstand or bring folding chairs

while listening as the "band played on." Others just stayed in their automobiles on Town House Avenue and Union Street with windows wide open.

The bandstand served its purpose until the early 1930s when lack of interest in the concerts necessitated their discontinuance. In 1934, the bandstand was moved to the playground off Lincoln Street.

Lakeside . . .

A trip to the lake always included a stop at Peirce's store at the Four Corners to stock up on provisions, where Grandfather Alden never forgot to buy a case each of Cliquot Club Golden Ginger Ale and Sarsaparilla. For some perverse reason he would also lay in a supply of Gerber's Fried Cakes — fat, greasy little doughnuts covered with sticky powdered sugar — although Grandmother Alden made her own delicious doughnuts once a week. Next, a stop at Captain Bradford's for vegetables and milk and another at Icky Atwood's for eggs.

"Icky" — Fred, actually — Atwood was bachelor farmer who lived with his dog Goopy on Vaughn Street opposite the road that led across the fields to Lakeside. He had put in one semester at M.I.T. before settling down on the little farm where he spent the rest of his life. Icky's farm was a not a model of efficiency, Icky preferring to take life one day at a time. There was a huge hole in the middle of his kitchen floor through which the unwary visitor could plunge to the cellar; Icky was always on the verge of repairing this potential disaster but just never got around to it. He did position the kitchen table over the hole, however, and that evidently made repairs unnecessary. Nothing was thrown away at Icky's house. Since he raised chickens, he ate a good many eggs, and all the eggshells from years back were stacked in neat columns in the kitchen. The parlor, likewise, was filled with piles of "The Saturday Evening Post" that dated back to the boyhood of George Horace Lorimer. For a small boy the biggest attraction at Icky's farm was Goopy, a monstrous black dog with a gentle nature, who lived in the kitchen on a equal social standing with Icky and the chickens who wandered in and out.

The two Alden boys, teenagers then, did chores for Captain Bradford and Icky Atwood, sailed a boat on the lake and organized a baseball team know as the Lakeside A.A. They could spend the entire summer here, but the adults who had to work during the week spent only the weekends and the holidays at the camp.

The fragrance of pines, the sound of crows cawing in the woods and the sweet smell of soap bush blossoms still evoke memories of those happy, gone-forever days at Lakeside. The earliest recollection of this writer's life is the incident when his mother leaped fully clothed from the wharf into the lake to fish him out of three feet of water where he had fallen, and where he lay on the bottom thinking how strange the world looked from that point of view. Today the cottage sits on the shore at Briarwood Beach in Wareham, where it was moved in 1927, and where the sight of it still recalls the carefree days of Lakeside in the 1920s to those of us who can remember them.

Cephas Thompson and son — portrait painters to the world

by Jane Lopes

They do not share space in art history books with the Peales, or with Benjamin West or with John Singleton Copley, but the story of American portrait painting includes the work of Cephas Thompson and his son, Cephas Giovanni Thompson, both of whom were born in Middleboro and grew up here.

A self-taught artist, Cephas Thompson the elder, born in 1775, became a celebrity as a result of his travels in the south, where he was known and respected among the prominent families. He painted the portraits of men like Chief Justice John Marshall and Stephen Decatur, and knew Thomas Jefferson.

Thompson received many gifts from distinguished families in the south after he returned to his home and studio on River Street, according to Granville Temple Sproat, who wrote of "Old Middleboro" in the mid-1800s, and whose writings were re-published in *The Middleboro Gazette* in the 1920s.

Sproat said Thompson had "beautiful pictures of tropical scenery hung in his drawing room, a present from southern friends; and a silver tankard stood on the mantel shelf, a gift from an eminent southern gentleman. He preserved to the end of his days the warmth and cordial greeting of the southern gentry, and his love for southern society remained with him to the close of his life."

Although the family home on River Street burned in 1860, shortly after Thompson died in 1856, the carriage house where he had his studio survived and was remodeled as a home many years later.

It was in the River Street house that Olivia (Leonard) Thompson gave birth to Cephas Giovanni on August 3, 1809. Like his father, the younger Cephas was destined to be well known as a portrait painter, and his fame would spread beyond the shores of the United States.

Cephas Giovanni first established a studio in Plymouth at the age of 18, and 10 years later he was in New York, where he "became a popular figure among the literary and artistic groups of the city," according to the February, 1968 issue of the *Antiquarian*. Cephas Jr. married Mary Gouverneur Ogden, daughter of a prominent New York merchant, and in 1852, the couple traveled to Rome, where Cephas Giovanni met and became friendly with Nathaniel Hawthorne. He spent several years in Italy, studying and copying the old masters before returning to New York to continue his work.

Although it is difficult to distinguish between the work of father and son because many of their paintings were not signed, the Middleborough Historical Museum has a number of paintings that are believed to have been done by the two men. Portraits of Major Elisha Tucker and his wife Sarah (Peirce)



"GRANDMOTHER SPROAT," painted in 1943, hangs in the Middleborough Historical Museum. While none of the Thompsons paintings is signed, this one is believed to have been painted by Cephas Thompson, Sr. (Photo by Jane Lopes)

Tucker are believed to have been painted by the elder Cephas because of their dates, 1812 and 1820, and he is also believed to have painted the portrait of his mother, Deborah (Sturtevant) Thompson, as well as the portraits of Major Levi Peirce, a founder of the Baptist Church, and wife Sarah.

Attributed to Cephas Giovanni are portraits of his uncle, Dr. Arad Thompson, one of the town's first physicians, Grandmother Sproat, and Deborah (Clarke) Thompson, also a relative.

Artistic talent ran in the Thompson family, although it was not encouraged by Cephas Sr. in any of his children other than Cephas Giovanni. The historical museum owns two paintings

(Continued on page 14)

Massachusetts and the Constitution . . .

as a selectman, serving until 1797, and also served in the state Senate from 1796-1805. He died on Dec. 21, 1819.

If these three men could be described as prominent citizens, the Rev. Issac Backus merits celebrity status.

Born in Connecticut in 1724, Backus came to Middleboro in 1746 to serve as pastor of the Congregational Church in North Middleboro. After 10 years with the church, Backus and his followers left the parish to organize the 19th Baptist Church in Massachusetts. In 1771, he was named agent for all the Baptist churches in Massachusetts. He attended the first Continental Congress in 1775, not as a delegate, but perhaps as a church agent.

Americans in the period between the Revolution and the ratification of the Constitution were not anxious to replace king and Parliament with another potentially tyrannical government.

Although he had no formal education, he was well read and authored more than 50 publications, mainly collections of sermons and discourses on government and liberty. In 1797, nine years prior to his death, he received an honorary master of arts degree from Brown University.

In "The Massachusetts Constitution: A Social Impact," Ronald M. Peters, Jr. says the clergy exerted its influence in the 1780 Constitutional ratification process through the media, and notes that Isaac Backus "waged an incessant battle in the newspapers and in a number of pamphlets against the oppressive tactics of the Congregationalist majority" and fought against the concept of public support for the ministry on the grounds that it favored the Congregational church.

Throughout his career, Backus continued to urge the separation of church and state, and in his only speech at the U.S. Constitutional ratification convention, he asserted that "religion is ever a matter between God and individual; and therefore, no man or men can impose any religious test, without invading the essential prerogatives of our Lord Jesus Christ...the imposing of religious tests hath been the greatest engine of tyranny in the world."

As he moved toward a supportive stance on the new federal constitution, Backus, like others, may have been influenced by

the leading figures in the state who spoke in favor of the document. He could have conversed in the subject of the proposed federal government with his "neighbor," former governor James Bowdoin, a supporter of the Constitution who owned property in Middleboro and built a "retirement" home in the town during his term as governor, which began in 1785. Bowdoin, a close friend of Middleboro resident Peter Oliver (chief justice of the appeals court) until policies separated them during the Revolution, owned over 400 acres of land in Middleboro and was a partner in Oliver's iron mills.

But Backus' position was also a reflection of the times, and of the beliefs and behavior of his fellow New Englanders.

Americans in the period between the Revolution and the ratification of the Constitution were not anxious to replace king and Parliament with another potentially tyrannical government, yet they were committed to the concepts of political and social order they had grown up with. New Englanders were further committed to the notion that Americans had the opportunity to create a new republic with the virtues handed down by their Puritan forebears. From 1776 on, they were open to the possibility of a central government, but only if their liberty could be protected. In addition, New England society had developed and split off into special interest groups — merchants, farmers, professional people — who were anxious to see a government that would protect their rights and interests.

The people of Massachusetts rejected an early attempt at a state Constitution, in 1778, because easterners wanted a strong, independent upper house and didn't get it while westerners objected to property qualifications for senators and the governor, and no one was happy with the plan for every town to be represented equally in the House of Representatives.

A Constitution was finally ratified in 1780, but "in town after town, a querulous individualism marked the evaluation of the document," says Richard D. Brown in "Massachusetts: A History." There were numerous complaints about the plan, ranging from proposed voting qualifications (Middleboro suggested there was something unfair about a man with 60 pounds having the same vote as a man with 600 pounds if one were going to qualify voters according to the property), what amounted to a Congregational monopoly supported by the state, apportionment and the like. "The ratification process revealed the absence of a coherent, integrated outlook toward state government. Individualism had not degenerated into the chaos of every man for himself, but there were hints of the spirit of every town and every interest group itself," said historian Richard Brown.

The state Constitution was only narrowly approved, but in the years between 1780 and 1787, it became apparent to all but the most stubborn individualist that something needed to be done about the Articles of Confederation. Shays' rebellion helped to convince people that order had to be brought out of



Sam Bowdoin

chaos, as did the economic situation in general. When moderates and anti-central government types like John Hancock and Samuel Adams went over to the side of the new Federalists, enough of the "no" votes switched to allow the pro-Constitution delegates to carry the day by a narrow 187-168 at the 1788 convention.

This narrow majority was convinced, along with Rev. Backus, that the new Constitution was written in such a way that it enhanced rather than took away from the individual's rights. Backus summed up his feelings in his speech to the 1788 convention delegates:

"...the American Revolution was built upon the principal that all men are born with an equal right to liberty and property, and that officers have no right to any power but what is fairly given them by the consent of the people. And in the Constitution now proposed to us, a power is reserved to the people constitutionally to reduce every officer again to a private station; and what a guard is this against their invasion of others' rights, or abusing their power! Such a door is now opened for the establishment of righteous government, and for the securing of equal liberty, as never was before opened to any people upon earth.

Middleborough Historical Museum



Featuring Tom Thumb & his lady memorabilia and collection. Museum includes seven buildings and many different collections.

ADMISSION:

\$2.00 for adults 75¢ for students

Open Wednesday - Sunday, July - September.
Open by appointment only during the winter.
Call Director/Curator Marsha Manchester, 947-7120

JACKSON STREET
MIDDLEBORO, MASSACHUSETTS
off Route 105, behind Police Station



ENTRANTS IN THE Children's Costume Contest held on the museum grounds during Tom Thumb Days line up for the judging. Children were instructed to dress as General Tom Thumb, Lavinia Warren, or others who might have appeared in P. T. Barnum's circus. (Photo by Jane Lopes)



From the Desk of Jay Cuttle

Professional Sales Assistance

Experienced advertising sales professional available to assist your club or organization with advertising sales on a commission basis.

(508) 947-7477



Open
Mon.-Sat.
9-5:30
Thurs. eve.

Women's Clothing

**Bridal Fashions . . . and
Gowns for all occasions**

Rent-A-Tux

14 So. Main Street
Middleboro, Ma. 02346
508-947-8400

The store . . . with fashion galore!

Decas, Murray & Decas *Attorneys-at-law*

COL. PETER H. PEIRCE HOUSE
(Next to Middleboro Public Library)

132 N. Main St.
Middleboro, MA

947-4433

George C. Decas, Esq.
Daniel F. Murray, Esq.
William C. Decas, Esq.

Smoke, fire and alarums — Middleboro Fire District, 1887-88

by Robert M. Beals

During the past few years, I have written articles on the Middleboro Fire Department for the Middleborough Antiquarian. I have continued to search for additional material, and during the summer of 1990, I located copies of the Annual Reports of the Middleboro Fire District for 1887 and 1888, at the Museum.

Apparatus consisted of Hook & Ladder Truck No. 1, and Chemical Engine No. 1, which were located at the Central Fire House on School Street; Hose Cart No. 2, was located at the Courtland Street house; Hose Cart No. 3, was located at the East Main Street house; and Hose Wagon No. 6, was located at the Oak Street house, near High Street.

During the year 1887, there were eleven alarms, — three working and eight still, as follows:

February 18th, 10:20 p.m., old Post Office building, Center Street, owned by the heirs of Enoch Tinkham and occupied by Charles Jaques, dry goods, first floor, and Otis Barden, barber, second floor. Insurance paid on Jaques' stock, \$2,637; insured for \$6,000, Insurance paid on building, \$100; insured for \$1,500. Cause — hook of hanging lamp setting fire to ceiling.

May 6th, 3:40 p.m., dwelling house on Nemasket Street, owned by Edward F. Tinkham and occupied by the Misses Winslow. Insurance paid, \$10; insured for \$2,500.

December 7th, 11:05 p.m., building on Cambridge Street, unoccupied, owned by Peter Washburn. Cause — incendiary. Insurance paid, \$2; insured for \$700.

Other fires were extinguished by members of the department and citizens without giving a general alarm.

There were seven working and six still alarms during the year 1888, as follows:

January 22nd, 12.16 p.m., Church owned and occupied by the Central Baptist Society. Loss, \$12,000; insurance, \$6,800; insurance paid, \$6,800. Cause, defective chimney.

February 20th, 8:20 p.m., Jackson Street. Dwelling, owned by P.H. Peirce's heirs, and occupied by Mr. Crap. Loss nominal. Cause, burning soot in chimney.

June 6th, 8:45 a.m., LeBaron Avenue. Sawmill, owned and occupied by J.B. LeBaron. Loss nominal. Case, sparks from chimney setting fire to roof.

July 18th, 3:50 a.m., Oak Street. Workshop, owned and occupied by Joel W. Tobey. Loss, \$40; no insurance. Cause unknown.

September 9th, 5:10 a.m., Main Street. Store owned and occupied by M. Toole. Loss, \$600; insurance on building, \$1,200, on stock, \$3,000. Insurance paid \$600. Cause, spontaneous combustion.

September 30th, 7:15 p.m., Main Street. Barn, owned and occupied by R. F. Barrows. Loss on barn, \$100, on contents, \$75; no insurance. Cause, smoking in barn.

November 1st, 12:55 p.m., Water Street: Manufactory, owned by J. W. P. Jenks. Loss on building, \$25; no insurance. Occupied by E. T. Jenks, machinist, loss on stock nominal; occupied by W. B. Stetson, shoe manufacturer, loss \$517, insurance \$10,000, insurance paid \$517; occupied by W. H. Schleuter & Co., jewel case manufacturers, loss \$25, insurance \$400, insurance paid \$25. Cause, spontaneous combustion in boiler room.

One of the Water Commissioners listed on both reports was my great-grandfather, Joseph E. Beals. He is also list as superintendent of the Water Department for which he was paid \$350 annually.

1855 Middleboro map available for Christmas

The Middleboro Historical Association is taking orders for framed copies of the 1855 map of the town. A nine percent enlargement of the original black and white map, the 37 by 34 3/4" prints are framed in oak, under plexiglass, and are ready for hanging. Cost is \$75. Unframed copies in mailing tubes are available for \$15, plus \$2 postage if shipped. Framed copies may be viewed at the Mayflower Cooperative Bank. A copy may also be seen at the association's fall meeting, to be held on Wednesday, Nov. 7 at the May Flower Masonic Lodge, 46 South Main St. Orders for Christmas must be received by Friday, Nov. 16, and may be made by contacting the association at P.O. Box 625, Middleboro, MA 02346, attention Jean Michael.



MRS. ELISHA TUCKER, who sat for this painting around 1820, was the former Sarah Peirce. A painting of Maj. Elisha Tucker hangs next to this one in the historical museum. (Photo by Jane Lopes)

Cephas Thompson . . .

that are believed to have been painted by Marietta Tintoretta, Cephas Sr.'s daughter. Marietta left home with her brother, Jerome, after their father discovered that Jerome had secretly been painting in the attic. Cephas Sr. flew into a rage and smashed his son's canvas and easel. Apparently, more than two artists in the family was too many.

Jerome and Marietta traveled to Barnstable, where they painted signs to earn enough money to head for New York. In the meantime, Jerome is said to have painted a portrait of Daniel Webster at his Marshfield home.

But Jerome, who was married twice, once to a fellow artist, was best known for his sentimental scenic paintings, which had titles like "The Old Oaken Bucket," and "Scenes from my Childhood," while sister Marietta became known as a miniaturist.

Granville Sproat wrote that Jerome's paintings were "full of beautiful delineations of rural life and scenery . . . his pictures literally talk; they are fragrant with the sweet air of the country."

While their work did not earn them a permanent place in the art world on a par with the 19th century American masters, the Thompsons' legacy includes portraits that bring local history to life for those of us who have the opportunity to gaze, for instance, into the eyes of "Grandmother Sproat," who sat for her portrait in 1843, at the age of 63. Her dark hair pulled back in a no-nonsense style and partially covered by a white frilled cap that softens her unsmiling visage, Lucy Morton Sproat looks out across the room in the historical museum as if she could offer wise advice, if only one would seek it.

A. T. Maddigan LAW OFFICE

P.O. Box 72
Thatcher's Row
Middleboro, MA 02346

947-0645

Thomas A. Maddigan

- Estate Planning • Wills
- Probate • General Practice of Law



50 Center Street, Middleboro

—HOURS—

Mon., Tues., Wed., Fri. 9-5

Thurs. 9-8 Sat. 9-1

Or By Appointment At Your Convenience

(508) 947-5165

"Our personalized services are free"

L. H. Chace & Sons Chevrolet, Inc.

Established 1926

People who appreciate
value and honesty
do business at
Chace Chevrolet!



Route 105 at Junction I-495, Middleboro

947-2600

TOLL FREE 800-649-9202

Our commitment to offering you the best improves with age.



You may be getting older.
That means better deals at
Plymouth Savings Bank — at
least when it comes to your
Club 55 Plus.

Besides unlimited free check-
ing on balances of \$100 or more, **Club**
members enjoy personalized checks, 5¼%
interest, plus accidental death insurance —
all absolutely free.



Plus, a free Member Benefits
book that gives you great dis-
counts on movie tickets, *plus*
theme park admissions, *plus*
rental cars, *plus* restaurants,
lodging and entertainment
centers all across America. And, joining **Club**
55 Plus costs you absolutely nothing.

So, come in to any branch office today and
get the benefits of being a **Club 55 Plus** member.
If you're 55 or older, it's a real plus.

Plymouth
Savings
Bank

Member FDIC DIFM



WAREHAM
(508) 295-3800

MASHPEE
(508) 477-7984

COTUIT
(508) 428-1300

MATTAPOISETT
(508) 758-4936

DUXBURY
(617) 934-0101

MIDDLEBOROUGH
(508) 946-3066

SANDWICH
(508) 888-4444

FALMOUTH
(508) 548-3000

MIDDLEBOROUGH CENTER
(508) 947-1300

TEATICKET
(508) 540-5002

LAKEVILLE
(508) 947-6601

NO. PLYMOUTH
(508) 747-1600

MARION
(508) 748-2919

PLYMOUTH
(508) 746-3300

Maybe Mayflower can help.



Mayflower
Co-operative
Bank

Member FDIC/SIF

MIDDLEBOROUGH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.
Jackson Street
Middleboro, Massachusetts
02346

George C. Decas
P.O. Box 201
Middleboro, MA 02346

NONPROFIT ORG.
BULK RATE
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
MIDDLEBORO, MASS.
PERMIT NO. 97